

Request by Member for Scrutiny Review



Please complete the form below to request consideration of your issue by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Proposers Name:	Date of Request
Cllr John Whitehouse	March 2006
Supporting Councillors (if any):	
Summary of Issue you wish to be scrutinised:	
Town Centre and Car Parks T & F Panel.	
The objectives of the scrutiny exercise would be:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to consider what sort of town centres we wish to encourage in Epping• Forest;• to identify the key factors affecting the vitality of each of our town centres;• to make recommendations on whether existing council policies affecting town centres should be amended, or new policies developed;• to make recommendations on whether any of the existing resources devoted to town centres should be redirected, or whether additional resources are required; and• any other relevant objectives agreed by the O&S Committee.	
NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS. PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER INFORMATION	
Public Interest Justification:	
It seems to be to be a suitable and timely subject for scrutiny because:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• local concern over changes in our town centres, notably about the loss of retail businesses in Epping and Waltham Abbey;• concern about the loss of potential employment and business sites in town centres to residential use;• current socio-economic trends that affect our town centres (including the rise of the service economy, increasing dominance of supermarket chains, the Internet and residents' changing lifestyles and leisure choices);• the ability of the district council to influence the vitality of town centres through its policies regarding town centre enhancements, parking, town centre managers, planning controls, support for Town Centre Partnerships and in other ways such as the heritage Economic Regeneration	

Scheme, and the need to ensure these policies are "joined-up";

- the lack of public understanding over town centre issues (e.g. the fact that business rates are set nationally and the council's limited ability to control changes of use)
- the need to base (potentially expensive) decisions affecting town centres on clear evidence and a robust policy framework;
- our economic development policy (if it still exists) has not been reviewed for some time and is probably out of date;
- potential extra resources for economic development via the business rate growth incentive scheme (or whatever the pot of money we got recently is called);
- the apparent difficulties experienced by the Town Centre Partnerships in making an identifiable impact; and
- the difficulty that the portfolio holder and F&PM Scrutiny Panel had identifying a suitable economic development key objective when we considered the draft Council Plan.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

I hope that any task and finish group set up as a result of this will

- * take evidence from traders, residents and landlords
- * look at best practice evidence from elsewhere and relevant research
- * consider relevant national and local statistics and trends
- * potentially use the scrutiny budget to commission research or relevant consultancy

It would be possible to expand the topic to take a wider look at the council's economic development policy but I think the above is probably enough to be going on with.

Council Performance in this area (if known: Red, Amber, Green):

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?)

Office Use:

Pick score:

Considered By OSCC: